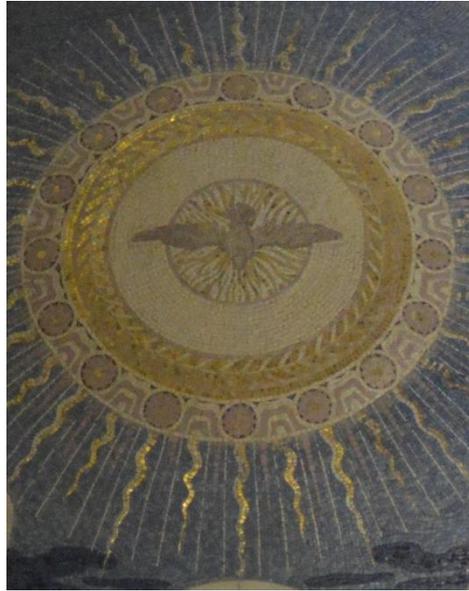


9 DAYS OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION FROM ASCENSION TO PENTECOST

In your prayer space, have a candle OR 9 candles. Each day, light the candle and start with the prayer below and then go to the reflection for the day.



Each day begin with:

"Renew your wonders in this our day as by a new Pentecost." Pope John XX111

Father, pour out your Spirit
Upon your people, and grant us
A new vision of your glory,
A new experience of your power,
A new faithfulness to your Word, and
A new consecration to your service,
That your love may
Grow among us,
And your Kingdom come:
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.



Day 1 - Friday: 22nd May: Spirit of Wonder and Awe

Light the candle and start with the prayer above and then read and reflect -

Reflection:

They were all astounded and praised God, and were filled with AWE, saying, "we have seen strange things today" (Luke 5:26)



As we begin the novena to the Holy Spirit and prepare for the feast of Pentecost, we are still in very STRANGE times. We all need a sense of wonder; sometimes brought on by the beauty of the natural world. On a Thursday evening, just as people were standing on their doorsteps to clap for the carers, London was blessed with a double rainbow of hope. The rainbow offers hope often in the darkest of times. We all have those friends who give us that light, love and energy; we need to be in awe of them too. They move us forward and bring new Easter light.

"Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

(Genesis 9: 16).

In the fifth chapter of Luke we can see so much of those STRANGE things that cause this spirit of WONDER and AWE:

- The miraculous catch of fish
- The call of Peter and the apostles
- The cure of the leper
- The cure of the paralytic whose friends lowered him down through the roof.

As we prepare for a most unusual birthday of the Church, we wonder if and when, we will be able to worship again together as the family of our parish. Be prepared for those great, but especially, little miracles that we are invited to share in-above all the miracle that we are getting through this and not allowing COVID-19 win and plunge our nation into darkness. Today, I'm in awe of all those children who have given up so much; I wonder at parents who've had to balance tight budgets to ensure that their families are safe. I stand amazed at the carers in the frontline who tirelessly offer themselves day after day. I admire our teachers, shop assistants, refuse collectors and all those working so we can have a sense of normality in these abnormal times.

We pray:

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Wonder and Awe**, we may be filled with loving reverence for you, for others, for all creation.

V. Immaculate Mary, Help of Christians, R. Pray for us.

Music..... <https://youtu.be/zmt5VNnrJIM>

Day 2 - Saturday: 23rd May: Spirit of Piety

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect -

Reflection

Today we ask for the gift of PIETY; for many of us the thought of being pious would not be taken as a compliment! Sadly it has connotations of a concentration on the external trappings of prayer and worship-hypocrisy that Jesus railed against in his dealings with the Scribes and Pharisees:



Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. (Matthew 23: 27)

These leaders of the faith communities were seen as “pious”, but their faith led them to have a defective view of God. Pope Francis reminds us of the INCLUSIVE nature of Christianity; Jesus was decried by these “pious” leaders because he ate and drank with the sinners, the disabled and those on the fringes of society: *The Church is a field hospital that takes in the weakest people: the infirm.* (General Audience 29th August 2019)

Sadly these leaders did not understand what true piety was all about. Those of us of a certain generation will remember the false piety of TV characters like Ivy Brennan in ‘Coronation St’ or Dot Cotton in ‘Eastenders’-their hypocrisy filled many a popular plot line. Today we are living an experience of the Christian family that is totally unique; our worship and praise has to be stripped back to the essentials. We are invited to come before God and the community just as we are and we have no props or rubrics to fall back on. Lockdown worship is actually the ideal time to re-discover a true spirit of piety.

Piety invites to live in a close, living relationship with God. With true piety our prayer does not become a task to get through or a repetition of words, learnt by heart. Prayer will be AFFECTIONATE and concerned with REALITY: more than ever this time of crisis has forced to remind ourselves WHO is important in our lives and WHAT is essential. In scripture, we see Jesus’s own spirit of piety; how he spent time in deep prayer, especially before crucial events in his life. We can see a relationship of trust and care that overflows into his ministry. With a true spirit of piety, there is a generosity that is shared with those living on the edges. It is a true spirit of piety that gets you through the bad times. Today pray that piety fills your life with love; ask for a deeper and affectionate prayer life. When the new normal kicks in and we can return to worship with the parish again, take care that your worship, at mass and in devotions, is going to be truly PIOUS as we concentrate on the essential and always be AFFECTIONATE. The choice is simple: do you want to be a hypocrite or a true daughter or son of a living and loving God. God invites you HOME to share that love and make a real difference

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Piety**, may we find peace and fulfilment in the service of God while serving others.

V. Mother of God, our Mother, R. Pray for us.

Music: From Now on <https://youtu.be/PluaPvhkIMU>

Day 3 - Sunday: 24th May: Spirit of Fortitude

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect

Reflection

This gift of the Holy Spirit is so needed in the world today as FORTITUDE is that ability to stand up for what you know to be RIGHT. In these difficult times, people have shown us real strength in the face of so many problems-after weeks of lockdown we have had to show real fortitude. The reality is that most of us have followed the guidelines and, in doing such a simple, yet very difficult, action we have helped to SAVE lives. You have given an example to family and friends that we can all draw on. Families and individuals across the world have had to tap into their reserves of fortitude, as they help each other and do what is right.

We have seen pockets of resistance to the internationally agreed advice; some individuals tell us that it is their RIGHT to be free! All of us have individual rights but with those rights come RESPONSIBILITIES that some may forget. Fortitude helps us to remember that it is not about “me, me, me!” We are members of a global community, we are a Eucharistic people. The NHS frontline staff and the carers in homes and hospitals across the world have given us an example and legacy that will last way beyond this time of COVID-19. So many have made the ultimate sacrifice and left home rather than contaminate. The sacrifices and hardship we are seeing daily makes the heart sing: today think of teenager Alfie Dean who runs ‘The Pantry’ to help elderly residents on his Babbacombe road; with his own pocket money he put a simple cupboard outside his house to stock bread, milk and essentials. From here local elderly and vulnerable residents are saved a long walk to the shops, as they can pick up what they need, often leaving a can or other item of grocery in the ‘pantry’; others have joined him through a dedicated ‘go fund me’ page on social media to ensure that this work of fortitude continues. Examples of real care like this are multiplied across the world.

Paradoxically this pandemic has brought about an ‘epidemic of kindness’; through this gift of fortitude, we have seen people’s true colours! As Pope Francis reminded us: *“We all know people who have experienced difficult situations and great suffering. But, think of these men, these women, who lead difficult lives, who struggle to maintain their families, to bring up their children: they do all of this because the spirit of fortitude helps them. ... These brothers and sisters of ours are saints, everyday saints, saints who are concealed among us; they have the gift of fortitude that allows them to carry out their duties as persons, as fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and citizens. ... And it is good for us to think about these people: if they do all this, if they can do it, why can’t I? it is good for us to ask the Lord for the gift of fortitude.”* (General Audience 14th May 2014)

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Fortitude**, may we stand up for what is right and speak out for the voiceless.

V. Holy Mary, Queen of Martyrs, R. Pray for us.

Music: True Colours https://youtu.be/lqWQCWc_zCc

Day 4- Monday, 25th May - Spirit of knowledge.

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect

Reflection

As we live through weeks of lockdown, most of us have discovered hidden talents and knowledge that we didn’t even know we had! Many of us have had to step up to the plate and become teachers as we support our children and their regular teachers. We probably have had to draw on our reservoir of facts and figures to help them continue their literacy, numeracy, humanities. PE, Science and RE. It reminds me of the time when I was asked to teach Maths one year in my career-I was literally one page ahead of my students! I must have done a half decent job as one of those students now run a successful chain of shops! In your home-schooling, I hope you have come to appreciate the beauty and strength that is the vocation of a teacher in a Catholic school.

We can understand knowledge as the sharing and transmission of facts: $1 + 1 = 2$ or the capital of France is Paris. Knowledge can be seen as logical and very straight forward. In Hebrew, the original language of the Christian family, ‘knowledge’ doesn’t mean to have a particular piece of knowledge in your head. Instead, it means to have an intimate, experiential, life-changing knowledge. REAL knowledge is intimate, gut-level, life-changing, experiential knowledge that changes your life forever. Jesus is the one who gives us this life-changing passion through a life lived for others.

As Isaiah proclaimed: *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”* (Isaiah 11: 1-2)

With this gift we will be able to see God’s plan in our lives; we will have an instinctive response to the strength of God, as we work together to build up the reign of God. With this combined knowledge we will change the world to make it better as Pope Francis has reflected: *“The gift of knowledge puts us in tune with God’s gaze on things and on people. Through this spiritual gift, we are enabled to see every person, and the world around us, in the light of God’s loving plan.”* (General Audience 21st May 2014)

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Knowledge**, may we discern your plan for our lives and respond so that together we can build a better world.

V. Holy Mary, Cause of our Joy, R. Pray for us.

Music: I can only imagine <https://youtu.be/PUtlI3mNj5U>

Day 5 - Tuesday, 26th May - Spirit of Understanding

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect

Reflection

This gift of the Spirit is essential for Christian living: it is the gift of discernment, coming to understand the will of God in our lives. God has great plans for you! You are called to do a task that nobody else can do because you are UNIQUE. In this interesting times, I hope you have discovered opportunities to use your God given talents. The Holy Spirit calls us to realise this potential as we discern God’s plan for each of us: God wants what is best for us and we are invited to follow his will. In our family of the Church we have those who encourage and support us in our discernment; don’t forget you can be a needed support too, especially in these difficult times. You can be a hero!

We have our heroes in the Church such as Mary, Dominic Savio, John Paul II and Oscar Romero. We need these saints as guides and mentors, but, according to another great hero of the Church, Don Bosco we are ALL called to sanctity. This time of lockdown has probably tried your patience as we have learned to live without going OUT for work, school, recreation and worship. We have had to learn a new way of having to relate to people, especially those who are so close to us. Today thank God for the heroes you live with and for all their positive qualities that have, hopefully, shone through. Of course there will be wobbles: those temper tantrums, raised voices and words we should not have used. We are a community of reconciliation and so we have to forgive. Think of those champions today and always: as an educator, I thank God for those heroes who have been part of my journey. To that endless list of colleagues, students, family and friends I owe a huge THANK YOU! I’m sure you have an equally long list. I have a wonderful friend who injects life with positivity and joy; her zest and energy for life is infectious and certainly captures the light of Easter joy in the darkest of times—for her life is not simple GOOD, but SERIOUSLY GOOD

We have a chance to rebuild the church from the ashes of what has come tumbling down in 2020. God’s kingdom was never about power, prestige or tickets at the door—it is about loving each other. Will we use our spirit of understanding to make the needed changes in the post pandemic Church? YOU can make the difference just by being yourself and not forced to be someone else, as the great anthem ‘This is Me’ shows:

I am not a stranger to the dark
Hide away, they say
'Cause we don't want your broken parts
I've learned to be ashamed of all my scars
Run away, they say
No one'll love you as you are
But I won't let them break me down to dust
I know that there's a place for us
For we are glorious
We are a glorious Church

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Understanding** may we understand Your will for our lives and fulfil the plan you have for each of us.

V. Holy Mary, Queen of Peace, **R.** Pray for us.

Music: This is me https://youtu.be/XLFEvHWD_NE

Day 6 - Wednesday, 27th May - Spirit of Counsel

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect

Reflection

The Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me (Psalms 16: 7)

With this gift of the Spirit, the gift of counsel we are aware of those who offer support and help. In these difficult times we may have lost those regular support structures that we have relied on: from a friendly walk in the Park to the quick drink at the pub after work. Social media has helped to ensure we keep connected but it is not the same as that face to face counsel that we share with good friends; we might not be able to pick up on those subtle signs of care that physical contact allows. There is a danger that sometimes we only think of ourselves and some global leaders actually encourage this form of selfishness, but As Pope Francis encourages us: *"The Spirit makes us grow interiorly, he makes us grow positively, he makes us grow in the community and he helps us not to fall prey to self-centredness and one's own way of seeing things."* (General Audience 7th May 2014)

Today we are invited to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with that Counsel; the Lord will speak to us in the intimacy of our prayer. However, the Lord also speaks to us through those acts of friendship and care. In lockdown, the Lord is talking to you, offering support and advice as we try our best to support each other. Pope Francis tells the story of the mother whose teenage son was experiencing deep problems; he was confused and turned to her for advice and help. His mum was totally overwhelmed and confused herself; she felt totally inadequate and unable to help him. Then, as the Pope saw it, the moment of true counsel came as she advised him, *"turn to Mother Mary, turn to the Church-they will help you."*

While we need to be open to the counsel given by the Spirit and through our friends who know us. The great Irish poet and priest and husband, John O'Donoghue helped us to revive and understand the concept of the soul friend from Gaelic spirituality, the *anam cara*. His writing gives us an insight into the real strength of counsel. Remember YOU can be that needed soul friend too; YOU can offer that needed counsel to those who need you: *"Your noble friend will not accept pretension but will gently and very firmly confront you with your own blindness. Such friendship is creative and critical; it is willing to negotiate awkward and uneven territories of contradiction and woundedness"*. (John O'Donoghue)

In this time of lockdown, I hope you have had a chance to assess what is important in life. In pre-COVID-19 days (only last February!) we were probably always too busy and that opportunity to reach out to help others could be put off until tomorrow or next week or next year. I pray that our homes of lockdown can be our own 'Upper Room' where we meet the Lord and each other. Lockdown has forced us all to 'come back home' and see what is important for us. I urge you to please pray for those who have become victims of domestic violence and abuse because of being forced to live 24/7 with partners or parents who do not want harmony and only want to selfishly hang on to what they want-they need COUNSEL above all. Jesus invites us to come HOME and be with him. In this time leading up to Pentecost, it is good to remember that the Mary, the apostles and friends of Jesus were gathered in the isolation of their home, the Upper Room, the home of Eucharistic. These times of difficulty and pain can actually help us live again with a new energy and life:

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **Spirit of Counsel**, may we see our lives in your light and hear your voice in those you send to walk with us on our pilgrim way.

V. Mother of Good Counsel, R. Pray for us.

Music: Times like these <https://youtu.be/7GEIP4YdrBE>

Day 7 - Thursday, 28th May - Spirit of Wisdom

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect

Reflection

There is something quite appealing about being described as a 'wise' person; it brings a picture of a grey haired academic type sitting in a library, deep in study. We need to get beyond this caricature and reflect on what the Holy Spirit is offering us in this gift. In the Scripture we are told that, at the time of his coronation as king of Israel, God asked Solomon what gift he wanted to receive. Solomon did not ask for wealth, success, fame, or a long and happy life, instead he asked for "an understanding heart that knows how to distinguish good from evil" (1 Kings 3:9). Today we pray for that 'understanding heart' as we pray for a return to some sort of normality; we pray that the light and power of that first Pentecost penetrate our own Upper Rooms of isolation. The Christian family has also suffered much in history because it lacked true wisdom. The Corinthians were doing and saying things that hurt other members of their community because they were more concerned about their individual gifts than about the health of the whole body. This self-centered attitude has been a common problem in the body of Christ right from the start. The twelve Apostles argued among themselves as to which of them was the greatest-before Pentecost even they lacked this gift. Wisdom gives us a unique perspective on the world as we can see with the eyes of God. What a profound honour! An honour that all of us can share. This gift implies a strong and loving relationship with God; through that lens of love we see problems reduced; our hearts are changed and, like the Prodigal, we turn away from failure and sin and bask in the unconditional love that the Father offers. Again we can turn to Pope Francis for an insight into that WISDOM: "*When we are in communion with the Lord, it is as if the Spirit transfigures our heart and helps it to perceive all his warmth and predilection.*" (General Audience 12th April 2014)

Ever the pastor, in that same audience the Pope makes reference to a married couple arguing-something that can occur in the best of circumstances. The row can develop and harm not only the couple, but anyone closely attached to them, like their children. Christian WISDOM helps the couple to realise that there is a much bigger picture here than just them. Wisdom could be the catalyst to make a change in their relationship, as they move forward to greater understanding and reconciliation for everyone in the family.

Wisdom will be needed especially as we enter the new normal and we enter another way of being Church. We pray, that we will SEE with God's eyes, SPEAK with God's words and ACT in God's way and more. In these very strange times we have been offered the gift of "sacred space", according to the Irish mystic, John O'Donoghue. This gift of WISDOM allows us to use that space creatively as we draw closer to each other, as he says: *"real intimacy is a sacred experience. It never exposes its secret trust and belonging to the voyeuristic eye of a neon culture. Real intimacy is of the soul, and the soul is reserved."* (John O'Donoghue)

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With Your **the Spirit of Wisdom**, may we enter into the "new", come to know you intimately so that we can see with YOUR eyes, speak YOUR Words and act in YOUR way.

V. Holy Mary, Seat of Wisdom, R. Pray for us.

Music: We shall overcome <https://youtu.be/UBtmPiCgTol>

Day 8 - Friday, 29th May - Fruits of the Spirit

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect -

Reflection

In the sacrament of Confirmation the Bishop or priest lays his hands on the candidate and prays that they receive the fruits of the Spirit. These fruits or gifts enable us to live our personal, family, socials and Church life to the full. The Spirit gave Jesus the same gifts so he could fulfil his mission and so the newly confirmed also are offered these gifts so they may better reflect Christ. The fruits of the Spirit, according to St. Paul, are *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control,"* (Galatians 5: 22-23). There is one Spirit who shares multiple gifts to enrich the one church, creating diversity and unity at the same time. Through the gift of confirmation each of us can bring our own unique gifts to serve the community good.

Those fruits enrich our lives and, in these difficult times, we have had to draw on them: we've all needed to have so much PATIENCE in lockdown as we probably need to show an excess of KINDNESS and GENEROSITY. Time and time again we see examples of real LOVE. Think of the example of COVID-19 victim Julie Cotter; while waiting for the ambulance to arrive, Julia was so certain she was dying, she scribbled notes so that her children would have something to remember her by. She told them how she loved them, how proud she was of them and how she "couldn't wish for better children". Luckily she made a recovery and again took to writing; this time she wrote to the Warrington NHS Trust, a letter of thanks for her life: *"I hope you can see how you are taking broken, frightened people who have accepted that their time is here and spinning that round to give them a second chance, a whole extra go at life."* Her attitude sums up what these gifts of love and kindness bring to the community; we can see beyond the pandemic in these seemingly simple actions. Today we think of those selfless frontline heroes who we rightly clap every Thursday night-in their care and support we see those fruits of the Spirit in action. The fruits give us energy to move forward; I pray that your Pentecost life, even in these times, will help us all in this exciting journey that will be filled with joy, as the Pope reminded us recently:

"To be full of joy, is the experience of the highest consolation, when the Lord makes us understand that this is something different from being cheerful, positive, bright... No, it is another thing, an overflowing joy that really hits us." (Pope Francis Homily 16th April 2020)

I love that picture of 'overflowing joy' hitting us, especially in these days. May that joy and all the fruits of the Spirit be yours today! In offering true love and care, we will SEE and EXPERIENCE exactly what Victor Hugo wrote about: *"To love another person is to see that face of God."* (Les Miserables)

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. With the **fruits of your Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** may we live our lives fully, in overflowing joy" of service to you and each other.

V. Mary, Queen of all saints R Pray for us

Music: Epilogue (Finale) Les Miserables <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9rUofBSh98&feature=share>

Day 9 - Saturday, 30th May Called by name: the gift of vocation: Faithful disciples

Light the candle and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect -

Reflection

As this time of prayer and waiting has come to an end, we pray that our new normal will help to bring us all a sense of unity. These past few months have been a challenge for each of us, as we strived to be disciples in the most difficult of circumstances. Before his return home to be with his family in heaven, Jesus asked his disciples to move forward in faith and trust:

'Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' (Matthew 28: 16-20)

As we have seen with the disciples who encounter the risen Lord, the challenge of resurrection is to SHARE. Mary of Magdala and the Emmaus disciples could have hung selfishly to the good news of Resurrection but they didn't. True Gospel preaching means going out from the selfish, petty and mean spiritedness on a journey of sharing with those we meet. At Ascension Mount, Jesus invites his followers to begin that pilgrimage as they call others to join them in honesty and truth. He makes a similar call to us as we rightly move slowly on from the disaster of CORVID-19. It is a big ask, it is not going to be easy and we will probably make mistakes. However don't worry as even the disciples 'hesitated'. This is why Pentecost 2020 is so important; the Holy Spirit will bring us support through the hesitations and wobbles that we all experience.

We need to heed that wise advice of the Angels, the true messengers of God who come always to dispel fear. It is no use gazing up into the sky, looking nostalgically on where Jesus has gone. The mission of the Church is focused clearly on the earth-such is the reality of incarnation: *'Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky?'* (Acts 1: 11)

The Commission of Jesus is that challenge to move on together in the good, and especially, the bad times. Even with the wobbles, we have no need to fear as the Holy Spirit is with us to guide and lead. As a Church we are invited, at this time of Pentecost, to follow the sage advice of Pope Francis in talking to the young:

“The life of Jesus is a life for others. It is a life of service.... this call means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.” (World Youth Day homily 27th August 2013)

We pray

Christ Jesus, before returning to your Father in heaven, you promised to send your Holy Spirit on your disciples. We are your disciples today - Pour out your Spirit into our lives so that we may reflect your grace and love and in this way, spread your Gospel to those whom we meet. Teach us to be your faithful disciples and animate us in every way with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hail Mary.....

Music: Be not afraid <https://youtu.be/wQr4udSiEew>

PENTECOST SUNDAY - Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth

Light the candle (on the cake??) and start with the prayer above; then read and reflect -

Reflection

As we gather in prayer on this great birthday of the Church, we recall the great transformation of the disciples that came about as a direct result of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit brought a new life, a new energy and a new direction as they left the lockdown of fear. They moved from despair and fear to hope and energy. The Great Commission of Jesus at Ascension comes true in one place as Peter addresses the crowds: they were tasked to go out into the world, yet pilgrims from across the world were gathered there on their door step, just outside their self-isolation: “everyone was amazed and unable to explain it. (Acts 1: 12). Perhaps in the new normal you will allow yourself to be amazed too!

I pray today that the feast of Pentecost continues to amaze us; certainly our experience of the feast in 2020 will never be forgotten. This is good and important to remember as we slowly move towards the new normal. The experience of lockdown has forced us to live a DOMESTIC Church, hopefully with some support. The paradox of isolation has actually made us closer as a global family, thanks to the wonder that it the internet and social media. Probably like you, I am in contact with family, friends, former colleagues and students from across the globe; we all SHARE the same experience and live The Sky News reporter, Alex Crawford puts it very succinctly, showing how a pandemic and social isolation has brought us together across the division. *“A friend from YEMEN, one of the poorest countries in the world, texting me to ask if my family and I are OK and safe in BRITAIN, a rich, first-world country, with a solid infrastructure and a health service envied around the world. It has been both staggering and humbling - and it has also shown how connected we all are, how this virus has bound us all together in a common understanding that's utterly incomparable.”* (Sky News Report: Coronavirus: 'Nothing has bound the planet together quite so much, whilst also separating us' 7th May 2020)

Pentecost is a challenge to see the basic good in the world and the goodness of others, even as bad things happen. We need to see the good that is out there. In the musical, ‘Wicked’ the two friends at the centre of the story have to separate but they recognise the GOODNESS that true friendship can bring:

So much of me

Is made of what I learned from you

You'll be with me

Like a handprint on my heart

And now whatever way our stories end

I know you have rewritten mine

By being my friend.

In the pilgrimage of life, friends will come and go; true friends will always make an impact and help write the story of our lives. True friends are that handprint on the heart that will remain forever-even if there is pandemic, physical distancing or breakdown. Perhaps today we need to look for forgiveness for those silly, and not so silly, things that lead to breakdown. We can now share the love that Jesus has for his friend Peter, who let him down big time. Today seek forgiveness for all that has alienated you from your friends

I ask forgiveness
For the things I've done, you blame me for
But then I guess
We know there's blame to share.

However, at the end of the day, AUTHENTIC friends want the best for us. In ancient Celtic monasticism there was always the concept of ANAMCHARA, the soul friend who was the compassionate presence and spiritual guide. Perhaps today God is inviting you to be that PRESENCE in the lives of others. The founder of the Salesian family, Don Bosco insisted that his members be that living presence to those they work with: to be a teacher in the classroom but a friend in the playground. Friendship will change us and we need to be OPEN to that change that will bring life-long light and goodness. I wish you the gift of true friendship on these Pentecost and I wish you good always. As the poet John O'Donohue reflects, true friendship is transformative-allow the Holy Spirit to transform your life and friendships on this Pentecost Day so you can be a true friend of God . *"A friend is a loved one who awakens your life in order to free the wild possibilities within you."* (John O'Donohue)

We pray:

Hearts ablaze

Beautiful Lord,
may we say "yes" to you
so that the Spirit in our hearts
will once again be set ablaze

Spirit of Wisdom,
guide our actions so they tell of God's love.

Spirit of Truth,
open our eyes to see the world as it really is.

Spirit of Power,
enthuse us to work for justice throughout the world.

Spirit of Love,
inspire us to respect the dignity of each person.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill us.
Come, Holy Spirit.
Come.

Stephen Davies/CAFOD

Music - For God (from 'Wicked' <https://youtu.be/IHI3tkrZSts>)

(Reflections by – Fr. Gerard O'Shaughnessy sdb)



now

Celebrate.....